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Forgıveness and cyberbullyıng ın Turkısh adolescents

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The quickest and easiest way to maintain the relationships is through the use of technology; however, this puts adolescents at risk of experiencing cyberbullying. The aim of this study was to investigate whether forgiveness is related to cyberbullying in high school students. This study included 348 adolescents in Turkey. The results of this study indicated a negative directional relationship between forgiveness and cyberbullying. This study focused on the protective role of forgiveness in preventing aggressive behavior. The findings suggest that forgiveness may be an effective coping mechanism that helps adolescents redirect negative emotions caused by cyberbullying using other positive emotions.

Key words: Forgiveness, cyberbullying, adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Although the shared experience of adolescence largely transcends regional differences, cultural factors, such as historical, economic, political and religious differences, play a role in social development (Adams, 2005; Apaydın, 2016). Adolescence is a period of biological, psychological, mental, and social development and maturation and affects children on both a physical and spiritual level (O'Donohue et al., 2013; Yavuzer, 2012).

Due to rapidly advancing technology, cyberbullying is becoming more common in adolescents (Ang and Goh, 2010; Smith et al., 2006). Studies have shown that forgiveness can increase life satisfaction, hope, and well-being and decrease anxiety and depression (Freedman and Enright, 1996; Snyder and McCulloug, 2000). Therefore, forgiveness may be effective strategy to combat the negative effects of cyberbullying in adolescents (Safaria et al., 2016; Quintana-Orts and Rey, 2018).

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is defined as follows, "to change the feelings of hatred and resentment toward the person who did harm, to propose a compromise" (Murphy and Hampton, 1988: 42). It can also be described as: "being away from the feelings of resentment and anger towards to a person who has caused a moral injury" (Murphy, 1982: 504). Forgiving someone reduces the intensity of negative feelings and requires abandoning these feelings completely (Richards, 1988). The forgiveness process may be an antidote to negative experiences, such as excessive rage (Baskin and Enright, 2004). To forgive, one must give up hatred and instead accept compassion, benevolence, and love, as forgiveness indicates mercy (North, 1987; Lewis, 1980; Gingell, 1974). A harmed person's forgiveness is associated with conscience; the person who harmed is spared from hatred and vengeance

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(Emmons and Paloutzian, 2003; Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2000). Forgiveness has a quality of discretion, which belongs to the person harmed (Novitz, 1998; Hughes, 1975). Forgiveness is a force in the hand of the victim and is gift-like or unconditional for some people; those who are to be forgiven do not need to do anything to be forgiven (Minow, 1998; Scobie and Scobie, 1998).

Enright's developmental psychology group conducted a study on forgiveness using Enright's theory, which was modeled after the theory of moral judgment of Kohlberg (Enright and The Human Development Study Group, 1991; Kohlberg, 1976). Each stage in Kohlberg's model corresponds to a stage in Enright's model. The model proposes that true forgiveness attitude will not be morally condemned even in cases where it is logically inappropriate because the forgiving person is always morally approved (Downie, 1965). The person who has harmed is ready to accept the mistake of what they did and approaches the harmed who must apologize and ask for forgiveness. If the harmed one perceives the guilty expression of remorse as genuine and sincere, they may be ready to forgive them to overcome feelings of hatred and resentment; however, the harmed one does not forget what occurred but also does not view them as a crook (Govier, 1999).

The concept of forgiveness has tree dimentions that are self forgiveness, others forgiveness and situational forgiveness (Thompson et al., 2005). Self forgiveness is defined as the person that increasing self-resentment and anger, reducing positive self-feelings oneself (Hall and Fincham, 2005). Forgiving others requires a highly complex process, which involves a series of steps or stages as follows: revelation (that is, anger), decision (that is, the desire to forgive), working (that is, acceptance of pain), and deepening (finding the meaning of suffering from pain) (Enright et al., 1998). There are also three factors in forgiveness as follows: suspension or overcoming hostile emotions against the person who has harmed; reconciliation and reestablishment of relationships; forgiveness (cleansing the harm) (Garrard and McNaughton, 2003).

Forgiveness is a basic social lubricant that helps support systems overcome interpersonal problems (Krause and Ingersoll-Dayton, 2001). While forgiveness involves reducing negative reactions, it may also increase positive reactions. Independent of the one who harmed, forgiveness is a voluntary, rational, intrapsychic process undertaken by the harmed one and requires emotional, behavioral, and cognitive components; it is a unique, motivational, and voluntary coping mechanism (Flanagan et al., 2012; Webb et al., 2012). In a study on forgiveness intervention in angry adolescents, Gambaro (2002) found that forgiveness is more effective in reducing various forms of anger and improving attitudes toward school and quality of interpersonal relations than a Rogerian-based support group (Gambaro, 2002). Forgiveness can help close old wounds and may increase psychological well-being; forgiveness-based therapies are also effective in managing depression, anxiety, and anger (Pettigrove, 2004; Tangrey et al., 2005).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying increased significantly in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with increasing use of social media use, file sharing sites, and mobile devices (Netzley, 2014). Cyberbullying is a new phenomenon that has developed with advanced communication technologies, such as the Internet and smartphones, as the destructive impact of cyberbullying manifests in technological format (Potha et al., 2016).

Cyberbullying is considered a special type of implicit, non-physical bullying (Chadwick, 2014; Willard, 2004). To be classified as cyberbullying, the harm must occur through the use of technology, such as a computer, mobile phone, tablet, WiFi, digital camera, or other electronic equipment (Patchin and Hinduja, 2012; Vandebosch and Cleemput, 2008). Cyberbullying can occur via blogs (interactive web magazines), web sites, emails, chat rooms, instant text messages sent via mobile devices, and video messages (Li et al., 2012). This targeted behavior affects the victim psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Most cyberbullying involves the repetition of behaviors. Replication and distribution of harmful digital content can be easily implemented by forwarding harassing comments, posting shameful photos, or uploading and modifying videos to harm the victim repeatedly (Patchin and Hinduja, 2012; Patchin and Hinduja, 2014; Brighi et al., 2012). The most important elements, which include: ''willful'' (the behavior has to be intentional, not accidental); ''repeated'' (bullying reflects a pattern of behavior, not just one isolated incident); ''harm'' (the target must perceive that harm was inflicted); and ''computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices'' (this is what differentiates cyberbullying from traditional bullying) (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010) and in addition to these, cyberbullying can involve stalking and death threats and can be very serious (Li, 2006).

There are two types of cyberbullying: the first is electronic bullying, which includes more technical aspects of the event, and the other is electronic bullying, which includes more psychological aspects of the event. Electronic bullying involves technical phenomena such as getting people's passwords, hacking websites, sending spam or infectious emails. E-communication bullying involves relational attack behaviors such as cyber-stalking, mocking people, naming people, spreading gossip, insulting people over the internet or publishing photos without the consent of the person using information and communication technologies. This directly affects emotions (Arıcak, 2012). Studies have indicated that one out of five teenagers between the ages

of 10-18 years is both a victim of cyberbullying and a cyberbully themselves (Parksa, 2013). Cyberbullying is associated with depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts, and cyberbullying can adversely affect school success and mental health (Parksa, 2013; Dokunağa, 2010; Klomek et al., 2008; Wigderson and Lynch, 2013). Other variables associated with cyberbullying in adolescents are school bullying (Williams and Guerra, 2007), spending more time on the Internet (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004), empathic tendency (Steffgen et al., 2011) and perceived academic achievement (Peker et al., 2012).

The current study attempts to increase knowledge in the research field by examining the link between cyberbullying and forgiveness, which is considered as a protective factor, in a sample of Turkish adolescents. As in the whole world (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010; Li, 2006; Smith et al., 2008; Walrave and Heirman, 2011) in Turkey too (Akbaba and Eroğlu, 2013; Erdur-Baker and Kavşut, 2007; Şahin et al., 2010; Yaman and Peker, 2012) cyberbullying is an increasing problem among adolescents. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2008), one of the reasons why young people tend to cyberbullying revenge. When a person is offended, and injustice is experienced, a similar set of responses can motivate the victim to search for ways to cope with his or her negative experience. From this perspective, revenge and forgiveness can both be viewed as coping strategies for responding to perceived injustice (Bradfield and Aquino, 1999). And revenge is a disease and that forgiveness is its cure (McCullough, 2008, 8). Forgiveness is a process of overcoming attitudes of resentment and anger that may persist when one has been injured by wrongdoing (Govier, 2011).

There is infrequency of research examining the relationships between cyberbullying and forgiveness (Quintana-Orts and Rey, 2018) and forgiveness can be a protective factor for cyberbullying, from here the objectives of the present study was to examine forgiveness as a predictor of cyberbullying in Turkish adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Research model

The aim of this study is to present the relationship between cyberbullying and forgiveness of adolescents and to test the model. For this purpose, relational survey model was used in this study. Relational survey model is a research model that aims to determine the presence and degree of co-change between two or more variables (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009).

Participants

The sample of the study consisted of individuals selected by simple random sampling method. This study included 348 adolescents in the Konya province of Turkey. There were 180 (51.7%) women and men 168 (48.3%), and 55 were 13-14 years old (15.8%), 175 were 15-16 (50.3%) years old, and 118 were 17-18 (33.9%) years old.

Measurement tools

Developed by Thompson et al. (2005), the Heartland Forgiveness Scale measures self-expressions using a 6-piece Likert scale (Thompson et al., 2005). The scale consists of 18 true/false questions across three sub-dimensions related to forgiving the self, the others, and the situation. The reliability of the test-retest was 0.82 and the Cronbach alpha for the total scale score ranged from 0.84 to 0.87.

Bugay and Demir (2010) translated and adapted this scale for use in Turkey (Bugay and Demir, 2010). The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Turkish version of the scale was 0.64 for the self-forgiveness subscale, 0.79 for the forgiveness subscale, and 0.76 for the forgiveness subscale; the Cronbach Alpha for the entire scale was 0.81. Bugay et al. (2012) evaluated the psychometric properties of this scale in a larger sample and found that the suitability of the original 3-factor structure of the scale for Turkish sampling and the compliance values of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis were adequate (Bugay et al., 2012).

As the scale did not have an application for an adolescent sample, the Cronbach alpha value was calculated on the study group; the value was 0.75. The correlation between the lower dimensions of the scale varied between 0.29 and 0.61 ($p<0.01$).

Developed by Arıcak et al. (2012), the Cyberbullying Scale consists of 24 items and uses a 4 Likert-type (never, sometimes, often, always) scale (Arıcak et al., 2012). The scale has a single factor that describes 50.58% of the total variance. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.95 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.70; according to these values, the scale is reliable. The lowest score is 24 and the highest score is 96, with higher scores indicating cyberbullying behavior. The Cronbach Alpha was 0.86.

Procedures

Participants were selected from various state high schools in Konya in the center of Turkey. The necessary official permissions were received from National Education Directorate and the school directorates. The response rate to the surveys was 87%. Data were collected face to face using paper and pencil forms in the classrooms where the volunteer students were present. Participants answered the questionnaire during a course in their high school.

Data analysis

In this study, structural equation modeling was performed to test the direct effects of forgiveness on cyberbullying. Structural equation modeling is a statistical approach that aims to test the theoretical model by estimating causal relations among observed and latent variables (Shumacker and Lomax, 2004).

RESULTS

The adaptation values for the tested model are shown in Tables 1 and 2 and in Figure 1. The compliance values are as follows: X2/sd=4.19, SRMR=0.03, IFI=0.97, NcFI=0.97, CFI=0.98, GFI=0.99, and TLI=0.93. The model had the desired level of compliance values (Figure 1). The forgiveness variable affected the cyberbullying

Table 1. Statistical values of structural equality model compliance

Measurement	Good Compliance	Acceptable Compliance	Compliance Index Values of the Model
(X2/sd)	≤ 3	≤ 4-5	4.19
SRMR	≤ 0.05	0.06-0.08	0.03
NFI	≥ 0.95	0.94-0.90	0.97
IFI	≥ 0.95	0.94-0.90	0.97
CFI	≥ 0.97	≥ 0.95	0.98
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.89-0.85	0.99
TLI	≥ 0.95	0.94-0.90	0.93

Table 2. Model related to Forgiveness and Cyberbullying predictor relations

Predictor Variable	Dependent Variable	Direct Impact	Direct Impact	Standard Error	P
Forgiveness	Cyberbullying	-0.16	0.06	-2.53	0.01
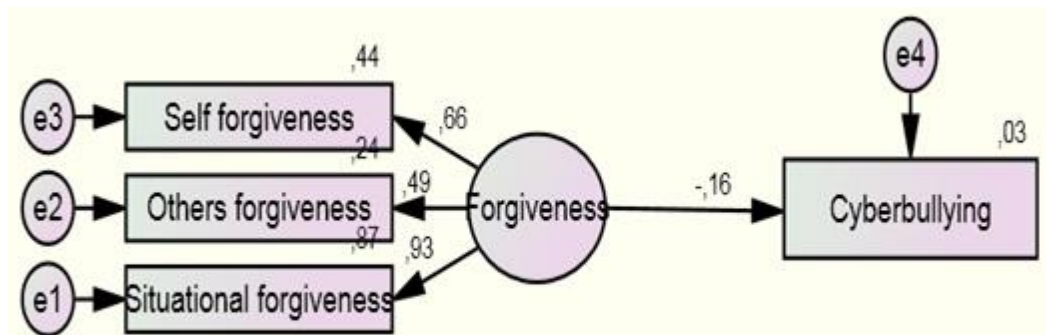
Figure 1. Model related to forgiveness and cyberbullying.

variable (t=-2.53, p<0.01; Figure 1; Table 2). The link coefficient value for this factor was β=-0.17. There was a negative directional relationship between forgiveness and cyberbullying. Therefore, cyberbullying decreases as the level of forgiveness increases.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study suggest that forgiveness can reduce cyberbullying behavior in adolescents. Spirituality has received attention as a source of resilience for adolescents (Kim and Esquivel, 2011). A number of authors have related positive psychology constructs to attributes that contribute to a person's success and general sense of wellbeing (Akin-Little and Little, 2004). Previous studies have also found that cyber-victimized adolescents with high levels of forgiveness have lower levels of cyberbullying behavior (Quintana-Orts and Rey,

2018). A study also found a meaningful correlation between forgiveness level and cyberbullying response in high school students (Safaria et al., 2016). Both forgiveness and friendship mediate the debilitating psychological effects of bullying and forgiveness plays a role in the mediation between being a victim of bullying and psychopathology (Barcaccia et al., 2018; Rensburg and Raubenheimer, 2015). Cyberbullying is negatively related to victimization, forgiveness, and obedient behavior (Ogurlu and Sarıçam, 2018).

Forgiveness might be an unexpected but powerful way to enhance school culture (Zakrzewski, 2014). Gambaro (2003) showed that a significant improvement in the forgiveness program participants compared with the control group on the following variables: attitude to school, attitude to teachers, self-reliance, relationships with parents, interpersonal relationships, trait anger, angry temperament, angry reaction, grades in school, school discipline, and forgiveness. It is important to describe

how forgiveness education can be used with adolescents in a school setting so that it can be applied more frequently. The recent increase in school violence by adolescents illustrates that there is a real need for education that could help students cope with their hurt and angry feelings.

Educators make a more conscious effort to draw attention to specific ethical values in school lessons, such as justice, civility, responsibility, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness (Rodden, 2004). It was observed that there was a decrease in the level of forgiveness and anger level in which the level of hope increased as a result of the forgiveness education program which was applied to 4th grade students (Taysi and Vural, 2016).

The forgiveness process may act as an effective coping mechanism that allows students to redirect negative feelings associated with bullying with other positive emotions (Egan and Todorov, 2009). Forgiveness can also help adolescents overcome adverse psychological effects caused by cyberbullying, as giving advice to the victims of bullying about forgiveness reduces anger (Barcaccia et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2015). Additionally, forgiveness contributes to the elimination of bullying in the workplace and helps aid in recovery (Mishra et al., 2018). Finally, pre-adolescents who participated in a forgiveness education group showed lower levels of bullying behavior (Gregory, 2016).

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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